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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 158

World Solar Programme 1996-2005

Draft resolution (A/53/L.8)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.8.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): Zimbabwe, along with other Members of the United Nations, proposed the inclusion of the item on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 in the current agenda of the General Assembly. There is also a draft resolution prepared and circulated on this item.

This item is of particular concern to Zimbabwe, as it is to many other States Members of the United Nations. President Mugabe is the Chairman of the World Solar Commission, a body composed of 18 heads of State and Government that, since its establishment in 1994, has overseen and guided the preparation of the World Solar Programme, which it approved in June last year. The Programme is before us today in document A/53/395.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005, which was launched at the World Solar Summit held in Harare in September 1996, represents a major effort for the promotion of all forms of renewable energy — bearing in mind, here, that the term "solar" is utilized in a generic sense to encompass other renewable sources of energy. The Programme reflects the political will of the 104 national delegations that attended the World Solar Summit and constitutes an important contribution to the struggle for the achievement of sustainable development.

It would be useful to briefly observe that, in the World Solar Programme, particular emphasis is placed on the mandates and recommendations of both Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development — the Earth Summit — of 1992 and the 1981 Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy. While the Nairobi Programme of Action provided specific energy-related policies and programmes in a number of areas, including energy assessment and planning, transfer, adoption and application of mature technologies, research, development and demonstration, as well as education and training, the Earth Summit also discussed energy and explicitly concluded that energy was essential to economic and social development and improved quality of life. Indeed, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change relates its implementation to the energy policies of the Parties to the Convention, and energy has received the attention of other subsequent major United Nations conferences, including the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable

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Development of Small Island Developing States, as one of the factors for furthering sustainable development.

Taking into account the recommendations which emerged from these major conferences, we feel that the preparatory process which led to the World Solar Summit and the subsequent adoption of the World Solar Programme lay on a firm foundation. The Programme was prepared on the basis of the outline approved by the Summit and the commitments contained in the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development, also adopted at the Summit, containing a series of recommendations for actions to be undertaken at the national and international levels. The Programme also contains global, regional and national renewable energy projects to be implemented as a joint effort of Governments, interested and relevant organizations and agencies, the private sector, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The implementation of many of the more than 400 high-priority national projects is already under way, with international financial assistance of some $400 million being provided. Let me hasten to add, in this regard, that many other national projects are being implemented with national funding, both public and private, from the concerned countries themselves.

We are convinced that, on the one hand, the increased utilization of renewable energies — and I mean here solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, tidal and so forth — will meet the increasing concerns of both industrialized and developing countries with the preservation of the environment and the interests of posterity and future generations. On the other hand, it will address the urgent need to provide access to basic energy services, for cooking, lighting, heating, cooling and so forth, to the more than 2 billion people who do not benefit from such an elementary necessity of life. Many of these men, women and children live in rural areas, remote regions or island habitats where they can only have recourse to solar, wind and other forms of renewable energies.

One of the United Nations specialized agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has already adopted — at the last session of its General Conference in 1997 — a resolution endorsing the World Solar Programme and inviting all Member States to contribute to the success of its implementation, with special emphasis on education and training. Several successful inter-agency consultations have been organized by the World Solar Commission, and several agreements have already been concluded.

The President of Zimbabwe and the other heads of State and Government who are members of the World Solar Commission believe that the time has now come for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution in support of the World Solar Programme. The endorsement of the World Solar Programme by the General Assembly of the United Nations would constitute a major contribution to its successful implementation. It would also enhance the attainment of the objective of sustainable development and would constitute a recognition of the work of the World Solar Commission in the promotion of the use of renewable energies. The strategic importance of the World Solar Programme to both developing and developed countries cannot be overemphasized.

The Programme is a tangible demonstration by the World Solar Commission and others that have supported the World Solar Summit process that they recognize that achieving a sustainable energy future is an enormous challenge which requires the contribution of all concerned parties, Governments, the international community, the private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations. Our major objective in this endeavour should be that of a significant shift towards environmentally sound energy sources and technologies, including the expanded use of renewable sources of energy.

Turning now to the draft resolution itself, it will be noted that the preambular part basically highlights the major mandates which have been the guiding principles behind this process: Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the World Solar Summit itself and the resolution adopted by the UNESCO General Conference endorsing the World Solar Programme. Also noted with appreciation in the preambular part is the support so far demonstrated by some developed countries in this process. The issue of energy will be a major topic in the discussions of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2001, and that very important fact has been highlighted in this section of the draft resolution.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the guiding role which has been assumed by the World Solar Commission is taken cognizance of. It is also in this section that the General Assembly would endorse the Programme and invite all Member States of the United Nations to contribute to its successful implementation. The Secretary-General would be invited to take certain actions, in consultation with UNESCO and in close

cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant organizations, in order to ensure that the Programme is integrated into the United Nations efforts to bring about sustainable development, to bring the Programme to the attention of funding and technical assistance sources and seek their contribution to its implementation and to continue to sensitize and generate greater awareness among Member States and international, regional and national institutions of the strategic importance of this Programme to the goal of sustainable development. The Secretary-General would also be invited to report to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the resolution by the various United Nations entities, with a view to its being considered as an agenda item.

I am most confident that the noble intentions of this draft resolution do not in any way detract from the profound objectives of the United Nations regarding the promotion of sustainable development and the enhancement of the human condition. I therefore would count on the support, and I dare say the unanimous support, of the members of this Assembly for this important initiative of the World Solar Commission, and I take this opportunity to make an earnest appeal for substantial sponsorship of the draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted without a vote.

Finally, I am advised by the Secretariat that action on the draft resolution now before the General Assembly, which has just been distributed this morning can only be taken tomorrow, in order to allow all delegations the opportunity to read it. But if all delegations have indeed read it and have no objection to it, my delegation would be pleased if that rule were waived and action were taken this morning on the draft resolution.

Mr. Khan (India): May we compliment the representative of the Chairman of the World Solar Commission, the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, for his statement, with which we fully associate ourselves, and for his introduction of the draft resolution on this crucial agenda item.

India is one of the few countries to have initiated research and development with a view to harnessing new and renewable energy sources, even before the energy crisis of 1973. As a result of sustained efforts since then, a substantial research and development and manufacturing sector has emerged in the country for the design and production of non-conventional energy supply equipment.

We also have one of the world's largest programmes for renewable energy. To give but a few examples, India now generates more than 900 megawatts from wind energy, nearly 141 megawatts from small hydroelectric generating plants, over 83 megawatts from biomass and more than 28 megawatts per installed square kilometre from solar photovoltaic systems. In addition, we have installed nearly 1 million solar water heating systems and solar cookers, which decrease pollution and bring nutritional benefits.

India receives solar energy equivalent to 20 megawatts per square kilometre of its surface area and is committed to progressively increasing the production and utilization of new and renewable sources of energy, especially solar energy. At present, solar energy is being utilized through both routes available, namely the solar thermal route and the solar photovoltaic route. We are using solar thermal devices for heating water, cooking, drying, water desalination, refrigeration processes, industrial process heating and steam generation for industrial use, including generation of electricity. By utilizing solar concentrators and properly designed receivers we have been able to achieve steam temperatures of up to 1,000 degrees centigrade. Indigenously developed solar water heaters of capacities ranging from 50 litres to 240,000 litres per day have been installed for domestic, commercial and industrial applications.

Solar photovoltaic cells have emerged as a useful power source not only for lighting, pumping of underground water and telecommunications, but also as power plants for meeting the entire electricity needs of isolated villages, hospitals or lodges. Based on single-crystal solar cells made of silicon, several types of these devices are now being deployed in India. These include solar lanterns, domestic lights, street lights, community lighting systems, power for telecommunications equipment installed on our offshore oil exploration and mining platforms, rural telephone systems and the like.

Energy-deprived populations mostly live in rural and remote areas, where extending national power grids would be prohibitively expensive both in financial and energy terms. Solar photovoltaic power is inducing a powerful revolution in such areas. On Sagar Island, in our province of West Bengal, a 26-kilowatt solar photovoltaic plant is meeting the entire electricity needs of all 300 homes. Similar initiatives are being pursued in villages in southern India.

Over the last few years, India has placed increasing emphasis on producing grid-quality power through the solar photovoltaic route. Two 100-kilowatt grid-interactive power plants have been established in the province of Uttar Pradesh. The private sector has been fully involved in these projects, and a 100-kilowatt power generation system has been installed and is being operated in Maharashtra by a private Indian company. Several companies in the private sector have also installed captive solar photovoltaic power plants.

Significant incentives are being extended by the Government to the private sector and individual citizens in order to promote the use of solar energy through a separate financing agency, the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency. Solar energy equipment shops known as "Aditya" are being established in major cities and towns, in collaboration with manufacturers' associations and non-governmental organizations.

At the same time, market orientation is being imparted to make renewable energy programmes commercially viable and sustainable. To that end, limited budgetary funds are used only for selected demonstration projects.

It is therefore natural that India has been a member of the World Solar Commission since its inception in 1994, under the chairmanship of President Robert Mugabe, and has actively participated in the World Solar Summit process. The personal representative of the Prime Minister of India attended the World Solar Summit in Harare on 16 and 17 September 1996. Subsequently, India also participated in the second meeting of the World Solar Commission, which approved the World Solar Programme for the decade 1996-2005. Under the Programme, we will be implementing eight projects, including those of research and development, institutional improvement, capacity-building, the generation of grid-quality power from solar energy, the decentralized use of renewable energy, and the construction of a 200-kilowatt solar power plant at Leh and another 100-kilowatt solar power plant at Nyomo.

In the spirit of South-South cooperation, India has been willing to share its developmental experience and expertise with other developing countries. It is the coordinator of the solar energy applications project of the Group of Fifteen developing nations and has been promoting increased use of new and renewable sources of energy through its Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme.

We are convinced that fulfilling basic human needs and improving the quality of life are the main objectives of any developmental process. Energy is an essential component of economic and social growth. It is therefore a matter of serious concern that nearly 40 per cent of the world's people have an inadequate energy supply for their daily needs. Support for and promotion of efforts to redress this inequitable and untenable situation must remain one of the priorities of the international community. We therefore commend the draft resolution submitted by Zimbabwe, which we have co-sponsored, for adoption by the Assembly.

Mr. Salleh (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to make a statement in support of the draft resolution on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, which was introduced by the delegation of Zimbabwe. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, The Honourable Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, is a member of the World Solar Commission and participated in the World Solar Summit held in Harare in September 1996. The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 was launched during that Summit. Malaysia fully endorses the Programme, the text of which is annexed to document A/53/395.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 embodies an important step forward in encouraging the wider use of all forms of renewable energy. The Programme has been conceived as a concrete follow-up to the recommendations of the Rio Earth Summit. It provides a comprehensive basis for an important plan to sensitize Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, the private sector, academia and others concerned on the need to support the development and utilization of renewable energy for sustainable development.

My delegation would like to express Malaysia's sincere appreciation to the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe, for his able leadership of the World Solar Commission and his wisdom in guiding the preparation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005. We also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and others concerned for their important and substantial contributions in the preparation of the Programme.

Energy is a fundamental factor in the socio-economic development process of nations, and in particular in the industrialization process of developing

countries. The growth in current patterns of energy demand is expected to continue well into the next decade. About three quarters of the world's energy demand is now being met by fossil fuels. Given the current proportion of fossil fuels consumed and the rapid growth patterns of energy demand, there is an urgent need to place in perspective a worldwide sustainable energy system.

Fossil fuels, the traditional primary energy sources, will unavoidably be depleted in the long run. It is therefore important that attention be paid to other sources, in particular renewable sources which would not only meet future needs but also sustain development for future generations. Solar energy can help meet those needs. This issue must be seen within the context of the protection and preservation of the global environment, cost effectiveness, the widely available option of conventional sources of energy and the more intelligent and efficient use of energy in order to foster continuing socio-economic growth.

Spreading the sources of energy must also be considered and appreciated as basic to the development process of many countries. Questions relating to the equitable balance of growth, equal access to amenities, national well-being and socio-economic stability depend on a wise and strategic approach to these important issues of energy supply. To some marginalized communities, to those in remote locations and to those not within the range of a national grid, the issue of providing other possible sources of energy becomes not only relevant, but crucial for their socio-economic uplift. The broader use of solar energy and other renewable energy sources, especially in the electrification of rural areas and the production of clean drinking water, will be an impetus towards the creation of a better quality of life for rural and remote communities in the developing countries.

Malaysia believes that in implementing the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, the international community must embark upon a strategic approach based on the concerted effort of all nations. There has to be a fair distribution of responsibilities between both the developed and the developing nations. There has to be adequate transfer of technology. Those who already possess or have benefited from the relevant technologies should consider it their moral and social obligation to participate in and contribute to the process of sharing and transferring. The developed countries, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and intergovernmental bodies which have the resources, knowledge and experience can provide the necessary assistance. Solar energy technologies, for instance, need to be transferred to the developing countries with minimum cost and hindrance, and with intellectual rights being part and parcel of the technology transfer. Additionally, the critical factor of funding must be given due consideration.

My delegation regards the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 as adding a significant contribution to the efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development and the further implementation of Agenda 21. It is therefore important that all concerned should participate to the fullest extent possible in the implementation of the Programme. My delegation is of the view that the Programme should be given due consideration during the deliberations on energy at the forthcoming ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to advance the movement towards sustainable patterns of production, distribution and use of energy.

In conclusion, my delegation sincerely hopes that the draft resolution will find the consensus of all members of the Assembly.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): As a member of the World Solar Commission, Senegal fully supports the statement made by the representative of Zimbabwe under the item on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005. The great diversity of countries that make up the membership of the Commission is a clear reflection of the consensus on the essential role that this important source of energy could play in improving the quality of life of peoples. This consensus has been reinforced by the inclusion of this important item on the agenda of our Assembly.

Following in the wake of the United Nations conference on solar energy held in Namibia in 1981, the World Solar Summit was held in Harare in 1996, under the chairmanship of President Mugabe and with the participation of the Prime Minister of Senegal. The Summit outlined a coherent set of priorities that are the cornerstones of the World Solar Programme for the decade 1996-2005.

These objectives are oriented towards the electrification of rural areas; education and training in solar energy technology; sensitizing decision makers and the public at large about the potential of renewable sources of energy; desalination and water purification; and the transfer of ecologically rational technologies.

The Harare Declaration in support of the Programme stresses, *inter alia*, the many advantages of

using solar energy strictly from the point of view of electrification, as well as because of the economic benefits related to poverty reduction through the promotion of income-generating activities, in particular in isolated rural areas.

Moreover, the harnessing of this great source of energy is significantly helping preserve the environment by greatly reducing harmful effects such as industrial pollution and deforestation.

In this way, the objectives and plan of action of the World Solar Programme are well-harmonized with the efforts of the international community to bring about sustainable development based on economic and social progress and the preservation of the environment. Thus, the Programme may be seen as an attempt to give shape to the commitments of the Rio Earth Summit, in particular of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

These are just some of the reasons for Senegal's support and special interest in the World Solar Programme.

We are grateful to the United Nations agencies and other partners for their support of the Programme.

We hope that the adoption of the draft resolution, of which my country is a sponsor, will be the beginning of a true world partnership in which all of our countries pool their efforts for the triumph of a cause which, after all, reflects the noble ideals of the Charter: "to promote social progress and better standards of life" for all peoples.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe on agenda item 158, entitled "World Solar Programme 1996-2005" and thanks him for the introduction of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.8.

As a member of the World Solar Commission, Jamaica actively participated in the preparatory process which has resulted in the definition of the Programme before us.

I take this opportunity to convey Jamaica's appreciation to the Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, for his effective and inspired leadership of our work since the World Solar Summit in 1996. May I also express Jamaica's appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its significant contribution to the development of the Programme.

The World Solar Programme offers a dynamic framework for the promotion of widespread use of solar and other renewable energy sources on a global scale. It represents a concrete follow-up to the recommendations of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development regarding the use of energy sources for sustainable development. The Programme was also formally adopted within the framework of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, in June 1997.

Jamaica has increasingly incorporated within its sustainable development strategy a sustainable energy policy, acknowledging the integral role which energy must play in promoting economic development.

We are committed to ensuring access by our entire population to viable sources of energy. Diversification of Jamaica's energy base remains a central goal of our energy policy and part of the wider strategy for sustainable energy use. Within this wider strategy, special attention has been given to the development of solar energy, with a view to assessing its viability as a valid alternative source of energy for the medium and long term.

The programme for the development of solar energy use in Jamaica includes the expanded use of solar water heaters for both domestic and industrial use, with a view to eventual reduction of dependence on expensive fossil fuels. It also includes the use of solar technology in industry, such as in the solar crop-drying process used in the processing of vegetables, timber and fruit. Such projects expand industry and employment opportunities in rural, agricultural areas. It includes as well the introduction of solar lighting or photovoltaic systems for rural electrification programmes. This is a particularly important effort which will facilitate the electrification of remote villages where servicing with traditional electric power lines has proved difficult.

Jamaica fully endorses the commitments and bases for action articulated in the World Solar Programme, as detailed in document A/53/395. We endorse in particular the effort to accord priority attention to attracting private capital investment in the development of solar and other alternative energy systems. We are committed to the

effort to accelerate rural development through the harnessing of renewable energy sources and strongly support the call for investment in research and development in renewable energy sources and for training in the application and maintenance of these technologies, with emphasis on community involvement.

We wish to underscore the need for technical assistance and financing for renewable energy initiatives. We therefore call on the international community to support in particular the global, regional and national renewable energy projects listed in the World Solar Programme. These projects have been identified by Governments as deserving the highest priority for implementation.

Jamaica offers its unreserved support to the World Solar Programme and, accordingly, has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.8 and commends it to the General Assembly for adoption by consensus.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): In spite of the calamity, human and economic, that befell my country in 1974, the people of Cyprus, through their indomitable spirit of survival and their hard work, have managed to lift the standard of living of our people to admirable levels. One of the sources of sustainable development used by our Government and our people was and is the utilization of the sunlight that blesses our island 360 days a year. Cyprus is not endowed with indigenous sources of fossil fuels. With the notable exception of solar energy, the utilization of which accounts for 4 per cent of Cyprus's primary energy consumption, the rest of the energy required to meet its energy needs is imported. Consequently, the country is totally dependent on imported energy, primarily crude oil and refined products.

Deployment of renewable energy sources is one of the priorities of Cyprus's energy policy, which has the goal of limiting energy importation. In fact, alternative forms of energy are being used on a practical basis by Cypriots for their daily needs. Windmills have been used extensively in the past for pumping water from wells, mostly for irrigation purposes. Solar water heaters are being used for meeting domestic hot water needs. The awareness of Cypriots of the use of renewable energy sources is reflected in the fact that Cyprus is a leading country — indeed, the leading country in the world — in installed solar collectors.

Solar heaters have been used in Cyprus since 1960. Ambitious manufacturers have managed to adapt the technology of solar heaters to local conditions. Today, more than 90 per cent of dwellings in Cyprus are equipped with solar heaters. A laboratory was established by the Government in 1980 to provide technical assistance to the manufacturers of solar heaters. After the 1980s, when the second generation of solar collectors penetrated the Cypriot market, hotels began to use solar energy for heating water and swimming pools. Currently, more than 50 per cent of hotels are equipped with solar collection systems.

Solar energy is used in Cyprus in other, non-thermal, applications, for instance powering telecommunication receivers and transmitters in remote areas where the electricity grid does not reach. Furthermore, the Cypriot Telecommunication Authority has installed solar cells in telephone kiosks which are not easily accessible by the electricity grid. Further, solar energy utilization in Cyprus is being pursued both by the private sector and by the Government authorities. Towards that end, research and adaptation work is being carried out in fields such as solar cooling and heating, solar desalination and further deployment of photovoltaic systems. It is estimated that the contribution of solar energy to the national energy balance will double in the next 10 years.

Within the context of the policy for the further exploitation of renewable energy sources, the Electricity Authority of Cyprus has taken the decision to purchase electricity produced from alternative sources and fuels at a higher price than it would cost the Authority to produce it. This measure is considered to be a milestone for sustainable development and for the promotion of solar energy for the production of electricity.

My Government is willing to share our experience and expertise on this issue with other interested developing countries.

Cyprus expresses its deep appreciation to Zimbabwe for its important initiative and for hosting the World Solar Summit. We lend our full support to the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and are pleased to be among the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.8, which, we hope, will be adopted without a vote.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform members that the General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/53/L.8 tomorrow morning in order to allow consultations to be concluded.

Agenda item 159

Observer status for the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/53/L.3)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Guatemala to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.3.

Mr. Estévez López (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my honour on behalf of its 32 sponsors to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.3, entitled "Observer status for the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly".

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The original sponsors of this draft resolution are the 25 member States of the Association — all of which belong the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States — as well as France, an associate member, and the Netherlands, which participates as an observer in the activities of the Association that are of particular interest to it. The members of the Association are extremely grateful to France and to the Netherlands for their sponsorship. They are also grateful to the most recent sponsors of the draft resolution, namely, Bangladesh, Canada, India, Italy and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Three of those States — Canada, India and Italy — have observer status in the Association.

In decision 49/426 of December 1994, the General Assembly recognized the appropriateness of granting observer status in the Assembly to,

> "those intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly".

The explanatory memorandum that is annexed to document A/53/143, which was presented to the Assembly last July, outlined the reasons why the activities of the Association of Caribbean States, an intergovernmental organization, fully meet this criterion. That memorandum also indicated that the adoption of the draft resolution included in document A/53/143 as annex II, which I am honoured to introduce today, would be beneficial to the Association and therefore to the Assembly, which promotes goals that coincide largely with those of the Association.

In fact, the Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States, which entered into force on 4 August 1995, states in article III, paragraph 1:

> "The Association is an organisation for consultation, cooperation and concerted action, whose purpose is to identify and promote the implementation of policies and programmes designed to:
>
> (a) harness, utilise and develop the collective capabilities of the Caribbean Region to achieve sustained cultural, economic, social, scientific and technological advancement;
>
> (b) develop the potential of the Caribbean Sea through interaction among Member States and with third parties;
>
> (c) promote an enhanced economic space for trade and investment with opportunities for cooperation and concerted action, in order to increase the benefits which accrue to the peoples of the Caribbean from their resources and assets, including the Caribbean Sea;
>
> (d) establish, consolidate and augment, as appropriate, institutional structures and cooperative arrangements responsive to the various cultural identities, developmental needs and normative systems within the region."

For all these reasons, it seems to us that it would be excessive and unnecessary for us to try the patience of the Assembly by dwelling further on the appropriateness of the Assembly's adopting the draft resolution before us. I will add, however, that the draft resolution is self-explanatory and that its operative part is identical to those of earlier resolutions through which the General Assembly granted observer status to other intergovernmental organizations.

I will therefore conclude by expressing the hope that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote. I would also like to express the appreciation of its sponsors to all the members that support it.

Mr. Singh (India): I deem it an honour to speak on the agenda item concerning the granting of observer status to the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly.

Relations between India and the countries of the Caribbean region go well back into history. Strengthened by a shared historical and cultural experience, these relations are poised for a new level of development, reflecting the common aspirations of our countries and peoples.

I had the privilege of visiting some countries of the region in 1991 as Minister of State for External Affairs. The warmth of the people and the extensive potentialities for intensified cooperation between India and the Caribbean countries that I observed during that visit left an indelible impression on me. My presence here today in many ways reflects this personal attachment.

India enjoys extensive and wide-ranging bilateral cooperation with all countries of the Association of Caribbean States. We have therefore maintained close links with it since its establishment on 4 August 1995. As an observer, we have regularly participated in its meetings and are in the process of formalizing an agreement for cooperation with its member countries through the Association, in addition to bilateral cooperation agreements. We look forward, through that agreement, to an opportunity to share and to assist, but also to learn.

We have been distressed by the havoc wrought by hurricane Georges on some of the countries of the Association of Caribbean States. We have provided some immediate assistance and will endeavour to do more through the provision of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. We trust that with the support of the international community, those countries that have borne the brunt of hurricane Georges will soon recover.

The aims of the Association of Caribbean States, which seeks to utilize the potential of the region for the economic and social development of all its constituents, are exemplary. India, along with other countries of our region, has been engaged in a similar venture in the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. We view the regional organizations as the building blocks of a new compact of South-South cooperation for the economic prosperity and social welfare of all.

We are convinced that greater cooperation between the Association of Caribbean States and the United Nations would be beneficial to all Member States, enabling us to share each other's experience and enlarge our mutually beneficial cooperation. We are conscious of the enormous capacities available in the Caribbean countries. The granting of observer status to the Association would no doubt lead to a rewarding relationship. We therefore commend the draft resolution submitted by Guatemala for adoption by the Assembly.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Italy is very glad to co-sponsor the draft resolution aimed at granting observer status in the General Assembly to the Association of Caribbean States. Through this draft resolution the international community will show once again its awareness of the characteristics and special needs of the Caribbean States; it will express its appreciation for their extremely valuable role; and it will help foster an even closer relationship between them and the United Nations.

My country is proud of the excellent relations it enjoys with all of the Caribbean countries. In concrete terms, we are engaged in numerous initiatives of economic, technical and financial cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. The closeness between Italy and the Caribbean States stems from the geographic, environmental and historical characteristics that we share. The Italian people, who live in a land with almost 5,000 kilometres of coastline and countless islands and archipelagos, are no strangers to the problems and difficulties faced by small island and coastal States, including, of course, natural disasters.

Having common problems also means that we have many ideas and experiences and a great deal of know-how and expertise to share in helping each other. This is one of the main reasons why Italy has actively promoted cooperation and partnership with the Alliance of Small Island States since its very inception. I wish to underline that we have contributed with deeds, and not simply with words, to the follow-up of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in line with the historic Barbados Declaration of 1994. The international community as a whole should share and take stock of the invaluable experience that the small island States have accrued in many sectors.

This year my country, Italy, became the fifth largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget, reflecting its new position as the fifth largest producer of wealth in the world. Many Italian companies are involved in the building or management of high-quality tourist structures, cruise ship services and air transportation in the Caribbean. Last but not least, more and more Italian tourists are attracted by the extraordinary, exotic beauty of these lands and by the unique kindness and warm hospitality of their peoples.

Italy, which has long-standing ties of friendship and culture with the Caribbean States, will continue to follow this area with great attention and will continue to be as — if not more — supportive of its needs in the future as it has been in the past.

Here at the United Nations in particular, our friendship has also developed through common battles — battles we have fought together for democracy and against privilege, for transparency and against closed doors, for participation and against exclusion.

In conclusion, Italy welcomes the developments of the past three years, which have strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Caribbean States. This is a particularly successful example of collaboration with a regional organization and an exemplary partnership which now fully deserves proper recognition and appreciation by the General Assembly.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Caribbean is a cultural, political and economic entity of which my country is a part for reasons both constitutional and historical. These reasons orient Colombia's foreign policy towards the goal of integration and give it a fundamental interest in the development of relations with the countries of the Caribbean basin.

Colombia believes in the strengthening of the Association of Caribbean States as a body for economic integration and political coordination that ensures the balanced social and cultural development of our peoples. In this respect, the Association of Caribbean States has proved to be one of the best instruments for promoting the implementation of policies geared towards developing the collective capabilities of the Caribbean to achieve sustained social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological progress in the region.

Colombia has maintained a proactive and consistent policy in all of the Association's Committees, in particular in the Committee on Budget and Administration and also in the Committee on Trade Development and External Relations, which it chairs.

My country is the depositary State for ratifications of the agreement establishing the Association, which was signed in Cartagena de Indias in July 1994. Colombia also had the privilege of hosting the third meeting of the Association's Ministerial Council, held in November 1997, also in Cartagena, whose outcome included the approval of a plan for a tourism zone in the Caribbean, which we welcome and which will be taken up at the next ministerial meeting.

We have been involved with the Association since the process of defining its scope began, and we have made every effort to promote its institutional development. That is why we support the participation, with observer status, of the Association of Caribbean States in the framework of the United Nations.

We are convinced that in addition to strengthening dialogue among our States, the Association itself will gain new vigour as a mechanism for political cooperation. Such a mechanism is vitally needed to represent the common interests of our region at the international level and to work more closely with the United Nations system towards the shared goal of developing programmes to improve the standard of living of the countries of the region.

My country is pleased to support, and is co-sponsoring, the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.3 on the granting of observer status to the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly, which was introduced today by the delegation of Guatemala.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): Created in August 1995, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) is, by comparison with other regional institutions, a relatively new forum. Despite its brief existence, however, it has already demonstrated its great potential for promoting consultation, cooperation and concerted action among its membership to develop the countries and peoples that it represents.

The Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action which were agreed upon at the Association's first summit meeting held three years ago in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, identified three main sectors of cooperation, namely, trade, tourism and transport. In so doing, our leaders hoped to explore more fully the abundant resources of the Caribbean Sea, a sea that separates us geographically but at the same time joins us together through a common history, culture and interests.

Over the years we in the Caribbean have learned to appreciate the benefits of working together to maximize our strength and to fulfil our shared aspirations. As part of a widening network of agencies, the ACS has created expanded opportunities for our States to engage in functional cooperation. In addition to the three T's —

trade, tourism and transport — the Association also serves to intensify our efforts in such vital fields as education, health, the environment and natural-disaster preparedness.

To achieve its full potential, however, the Association of Caribbean States must be drawn into cooperation with the wider United Nations system. As provided for in Chapter VIII of the Charter, the symbiotic relationship between the world Organization and regional arrangements can boost the efficiency and effectiveness of international programmes. The record has shown that, with proper coordination, partnerships among complementary organizations can be of considerable advantage for all participants and all States.

Persuaded of this mutual benefit, the Caribbean Community States, which constitute 14 of the 25 members of the ACS, wish to fully support the Association's request for observer status in this Assembly. On their behalf, therefore, I would like to join others who have spoken this morning to urge the unanimous adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.3 as a first step towards the proposed partnership.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the Assembly in support of the draft resolution on granting observer status for the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly.

We are addressing this issue because of the links of friendship and solidarity that have historically tied the people of Cuba to the peoples of the Association of Caribbean States. The establishment of the Association of Caribbean States was not only a historic event for its member States but also a milestone for all of us who, with legitimate pride, predicted that this would be a great success in the process of regional integration to which we are all committed. Important international conferences on cooperation for development, sustainable development and trade and development have enjoyed the invaluable participation and support of the member countries of the Association.

Cuba feels honoured to participate in this debate. We are convinced that the Association of Caribbean States can and must contribute to the multilateral debate and to the progress of the United Nations. My country has an active presence and a high degree of interest in all the processes and negotiations taking place within the framework of the Association. Cuba has been honoured to organize a number of meetings of the Association of Caribbean States.

For many reasons, as sacred and long-lived as our shared roots, Cuba supports this draft resolution. We are convinced — because we have seen proof — that the spirit that unites the Association of Caribbean States will undoubtedly contribute to our shared progress in the quest for future peace, justice and well-being for all the peoples of the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.3

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.3 was adopted (resolution 53/5).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 159?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 162

Observer status for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/53/L.4)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Poland to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.4.

Mr. Kozlowski (Poland): I am honoured to address the General Assembly today on behalf of all 29 members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). I would also like to inform the Assembly that I have just learned that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has joined the sponsors of this draft resolution.

It is also my great personal honour and privilege here to represent Poland, one of the newest members of the OECD.

The OECD is an international intergovernmental organization established by a 1960 Convention and based in Paris. It comprises countries that share the values of an open-market economy, democracy and respect for human rights. Although it is not a universal body, it has developed a global scope and outlook. It is essentially a forum for policy debate, sharing experiences, discussing problems, designing appropriate solutions and appraising outcomes for the short and medium term. The OECD's standards of excellence are well-reflected in the statistical, economic and social data and publications it steadily makes available to all interested parties.

The OECD has three principal aims which are spelt out unambiguously in its Convention. The first aim is to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy. The second aim is to contribute to sound economic expansion in member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development. Thirdly, the OECD seeks to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations.

These aims are to the fullest extent compatible with the principal goals of the United Nations. They clearly confirm that both the United Nations and the OECD have a common agenda and may benefit from establishing a closer relationship.

The OECD covers most areas of government activity. The issues it deals with include economics, finance, statistics, fiscal and enterprise affairs, trade, energy, transport, environment, development cooperation, education, employment, labour and social affairs, science, technology and industry, food, agriculture and fisheries, public management and territorial development. The OECD carries out its work through some 200 specialized bodies assisted by an international secretariat of about 1,900 staff.

In addition, the OECD system encompasses a number of semi-autonomous bodies, including the Nuclear Energy Agency, the International Energy Agency, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, the Development Centre, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, and the Club du Sahel.

The OECD is an innovative organization, constantly adapting to emerging needs and requirements. Addressing issues across disciplines and countries, the OECD is now focusing its attention on such central themes as balancing macroeconomic and structural policies, ageing populations, sustainable development, combating bribery and corruption, corporate governance, electronic commerce, employment, education and training, taxation, trade and quality regulations. All these themes are relevant to economic growth and prosperity for the future.

Like its programme of work, the membership of the OECD has been continuously evolving over the years, thereby responding to new challenges and reflecting changes in international relations. Since 1994, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Republic of Korea have joined the organization, opening it up to the perceptions, influences and interests of new members.

Over the years, the OECD has also developed stronger ties with non-members, especially with those representing the so-called emerging and transition markets in different regions. This has been carried out through a range of thematic and country activities. Thanks to OECD's outreach programme, a number of non-member countries participate as observers in the work of specific OECD bodies. The OECD Development Centre and Development Assistance Committee provide possibilities for policy dialogue and analysis of development issues, in cooperation with a number of interested developing countries. The recent meeting of Secretary-General Kofi Annan with the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which was devoted to the problems of Africa, clearly demonstrated OECD's commitment to the cause of peace and prosperity in that continent, as well as its support for the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his landmark report on Africa.

The representatives of United Nations agencies and bodies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Atomic Energy Agency, are engaged as observers and participants in different meetings of the OECD. Likewise, the OECD enjoys observer status in the Economic and Social Council and UNCTAD. It also takes part in United Nations conferences and conventions on an ad hoc basis.

It is precisely this ad hoc arrangement that no longer seems sufficient, judging by the level of expectations and

potential for cooperation between the two organizations. Hence, there is a need for consolidation of the links between the United Nations and the OECD. A more workable, practical and mutually beneficial arrangement would consist in granting the OECD the status of observer in the General Assembly. This is in essence the rationale for the submission of this draft resolution for adoption by the Assembly. With this in mind, on behalf of the countries members of the OECD and the latest sponsor, I recommend the adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.4, on observer status for the OECD in the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.4.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.4 was adopted (resolution 53/6).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 162?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

Mr. Mangoaela in the Chair.

The Acting President: I should like to announce a change in the programme of work concerning agenda item 23, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", as contained in document A/INF/53/3/Add.1. Instead of being taken up on Thursday, 22 October, item 23 will be considered on Thursday, 29 October.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.